



DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE

— *What an employer needs to know.*



Substance abuse is a widespread problem in our society. An estimated 14.8 million Americans are current illicit drug users.¹ The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported that 77 percent of illicit drug users in the United States are employed. That's 9.4 million people. The chances are good that your organization employs one of these workers.

Drug abuse can affect anyone. You can't tell if someone uses drugs by looking at them.

Who is using drugs at work?

A survey by the federal government showed full-time employees who admitted to being current illicit drug users tend to be:

- between the ages of 18 and 25
- less educated
- male
- divorced or never married
- white
- low paid²

Industries with the highest rates of illicit drug use

- food preparation workers
- waiters, waitresses, and bartenders
- other service occupation workers
- construction workers
- workers in transportation and material moving³



How does substance abuse impact the workplace?

Employees who abuse alcohol and other drugs bring their problems with them to work.

Substance abuse lowers productivity.

- Problems related to alcohol and drug abuse cost American businesses roughly \$81 billion in lost productivity in just one year.⁴
- Studies have shown that substance-abusing employees function at about 67% of their capacity.⁵

Substance abuse causes accidents and injuries.

- Up to 40 percent of industrial fatalities and 47 percent of industrial injuries can be linked to alcohol use and alcoholism.⁶
- Employees who use drugs are 3.6 times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident and 5 times more likely to file a workers' compensation claim.⁷

Substance abuse increases absenteeism and turnover.

- An estimated 500 million workdays are lost annually due to alcoholism.⁸
- Employees who use drugs are 2.2 times more likely to request early dismissal or time off, 2.5 times more likely to have absences of eight days or more, and 3 times more likely to be late for work.⁹
- Illicit drug users are more than twice as likely than those who do not use drugs to have changed employers three or more times in the past year.¹⁰

Substance abuse increases an employer's medical costs.

- Employees who use drugs cost their employers about twice as much in medical claims as do non-drug-using employees.¹¹

What can your organization do to decrease the impact of substance abuse?

Implement a drug-free workplace program

In 1988, the Drug-free Workplace Act was passed, requiring all federal grantees and some recipients of federal contracts to agree to provide a drug-free workplace as a condition of receiving federal money.¹² In a drug-free workplace, all employees adhere to a program of policies and activities designed to provide a safe Workplace. The policies and activities discourage alcohol and drug abuse and encourage treatment, recovery and the return to work of those employees who have abuse problems.¹³

Even if your organization is not required to have a drug-free workplace program, your organization can still benefit.¹²

A successful drug-free workplace program may include:

- a written policy
- employee education
- supervisor training
- access to assistance
- drug testing

A good drug-free workplace program can lead to

Decreases in:

- absenteeism
- accidents
- downtime
- turnover
- theft
- workers' compensation costs
- employee discipline problems

Increases in:

- productivity
- profits
- customer satisfaction
- health status
- employee morale

For more information about drug-free workplace programs, visit
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/index.html>
<http://dwp.samhsa.gov>



References

- ¹ US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2000). *1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- ² **Website-** http://www.uschamber.com/sb/screening/0512_quest6.htm
- ³ **Website-** <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/occupation.htm>
- ⁴ US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (1995). *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics Sourcebook*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- ⁵ **Website-** <http://www.drugfreeworkplace.com/employees/americanrugproblem.htm>
- ⁶ Bernstein, M. and Mahoney, J. (1989). Management Perspectives on Alcoholism: The Employer's Stake in Alcoholism Treatment. *Occupational Medicine*, 4(2).
- ⁷ US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2000). *1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- ⁸ National Association of Treatment Providers. (1991). *Treatment is the Answer: A White Paper on the Cost-Effectiveness of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Treatment*. Laguna Hills, CA: National Association of Treatment Providers.
- ⁹ US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2000). *1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- ¹⁰ US Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (1999). *Worker Drug Use and Workplace Policies and Programs: Results from the 1994 and 1997 NHSDA*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
- ¹¹ **Website-** <http://www.drugabuse.gov/infofacts/workplace.html>
- ¹² **Website-** <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/WPWorkit/workitindex.html>
- ¹³ **Website-** <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/DrugFreeWP/DefNPurpose.html>